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LESSONS TO BE DERIVED FROM JAPANESE ART.

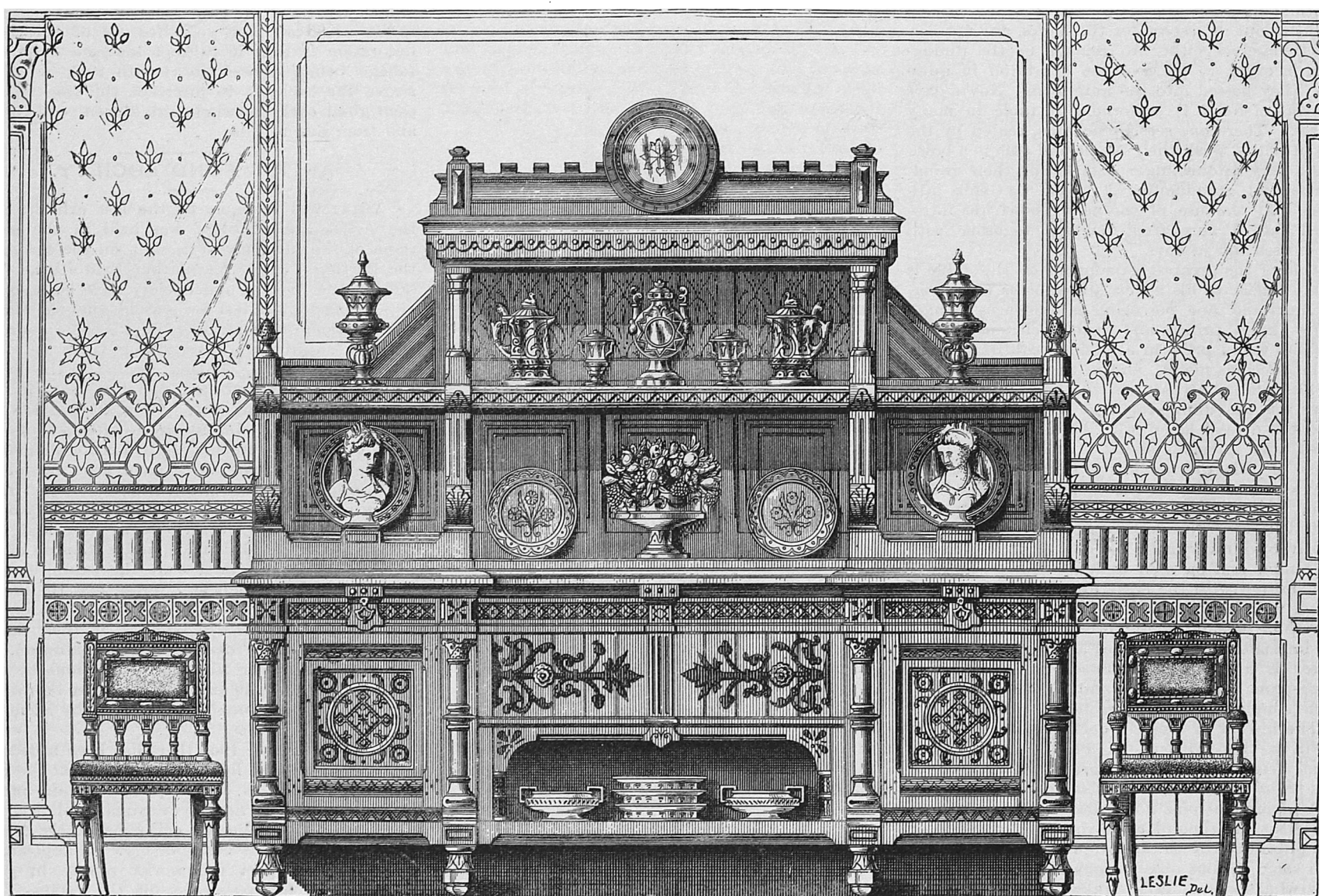
THE treasures of Japanese art, which during the last few years have been brought within the reach of all people of artistic tastes, have produced a profound impression. Their excellence, in a decorative point of view, is everywhere recognized, and the study of these specimens of an original style of art has resulted in a desire to imitate them. It is not in this way, however, that good can be derived from the study of Japanese art. The reflex action of all such imitative work is injurious to the copyist who, in proportion to his indulgence in it, loses the power of vigorous, original production. Besides, Japanese art cannot be truly copied; the spirit of the original will necessarily be lacking. It is like trying to copy a sketch by some great master of drawing. It looks easy, yet this sketch, which seems so lightly and carelessly done, is the expression of years of hard study added to great natural ability, and is in itself the very highest exercise of art—that which conceals art. Those who attempt to copy Japanese art commit the same mistake the beginner would be guilty of, who should attempt to copy the sketches of a

produced. They follow the methods of nature in obtaining diversity, while adhering to methodical rules. They do not try to make the two sides of a thing alike, but everywhere show an inherent dislike of sameness and repetition, while at the same time retaining the proper balance and proportion of the parts of the design. In this they adopt the principles everywhere displayed in natural forms. For instance, among plants there is a certain law of development. The leaves upon the stem are produced at regular intervals, and spring from it at a certain angle, according to a given arrangement peculiar to the particular kind of plant. The number of the petals, the stamens, the pistils, and the divisions of the calyx correspond in each flower, and the flower-buds are produced from the axils of the leaves, or according to a certain arrangement upon the end of the branch. In spite of this methodical order, however, nature, like the true artist, is an adept in the concealment of art, and one would never discover the plan of this disposal of the parts without the most careful observation. By the massing of the whole, a little variation of the shape of a leaf here, the appearance of a tiny bract upon the stem there, and then from the beautiful changing tones of color running through all, the charm of nature is produced. The

methods, and copy the vitiated specimens of art produced by the people whose manners and customs they admire. It is a melancholy fact that thus one of the most original schools of art that the world has ever seen is fast becoming deteriorated. While yet we can see earlier and purer specimens of this art, we should not fail to profit by the lessons to be derived from it.

The technical skill, as well as the taste for color, which seems to be a natural inheritance of these people, is difficult to emulate, but the study of nature revealed in the work of the Japanese artists should furnish a model for our designers. It is only upon such study and by the application of such principles that a vigorous and original school of decorative art can be founded. This is what we in America need more than anything else. The atrocities in design, which we see every day, would not be perpetrated if decorative artists respected their work enough to make it a matter of serious study, and sought for inspiration at the only source from which it is to be derived, the open book of nature.—M. LOUISE McLAUGHLIN, in *Suggestions to China Painters*.

STRAW CHAIR.—The best way of coloring a straw chair black and gold is with Stephens'



DESIGN FOR SIDE BOARD.

master. The simple design of the Japanese artist is the expression of much careful study as well as natural taste and love for his work, which together produce a result that is inimitable. The greatest benefit can, however, be derived from the study and application of the principles upon which his work is produced. Good service in the cause of decorative art would be rendered by one who, with sufficient knowledge of the subject, would trace the causes which have produced such a unique school of art, and formulate the principles which underlie its expression. Enough can be seen from a superficial study of the methods of these artists to furnish a lesson of great value to decorators. The chief source of inspiration is found to come from a loving and observant study of nature, and in certain directions the evidence of this study is very apparent. In the sense of beauty of the human figure, and also in the expression of emotion aside from the humorous and grotesque, the Japanese are lacking; but in the lower orders of natural forms their knowledge as well as the skill displayed in their portrayal, is marvelously exact. While merely suggestive, and never exceeding the proper limits of decorative art, their designs exhibit a consummate knowledge of the principles under which nature's effects are

Japanese artist has noted these various facts in nature, and cunningly makes use of them. His flowers, while treated with the greatest freedom of conventionality, still adhere to the plan of growth peculiar to the particular plant represented.

A valuable lesson can also be derived from the painstaking care of the Japanese artist, who lovingly works upon the article he is decorating, sparing no pains to make it beautiful, not only upon the outside, but in parts that will scarcely be noticed—upon the ends, the under side, even upon the inside of a box. It can not be denied that this spirit, in which the artist worked with infinite pains and with no thought of sordid gain, is passing away with the increased demand for these wares, brought about by the opening of Japan to commerce with Europeans. Few artists can withstand the temptation to over-production induced by an inordinate demand for their work, and when the desire of gain invades the mind of the artist, the spirit in which only good work can be produced disappears. The Japanese have not remained invulnerable to this temptation, and they, while trying to adopt the forms of European civilization with incredible rapidity, are inclined in matters of art also to leave their own better

ebony varnish, because no varnish is required, and if put on carefully to commence with, the first trouble is last. Bessemer's gold, applied as directed on the bottle, will complete the work. The padding of seat and back is effected thus; cover both with a piece of strong sacking, on this put the stuffing and the outside covering, and with a long strong tufting needle pierce it through at intervals having a button attached to the end of the string, and thus tuft it down with buttons; nail the cover carefully at the edge, and border with gimp.

A NEW PICTURE BY MR. GAUGENGIGL.

MR. I. M. GAUGENGIGL, whose remarkable pictures exhibited at Clarke & Moore's gallery recently excited considerable comment, is busy upon another work which he entitles "Un Petit Reprimand," showing two figures which are said to be full of action and *chic*. It was designed to have the painting displayed at the Boston Art Club Exhibition, which is now open, but the artist was unable to finish it. Mr. Gaugengigl has received a commission for a large painting which promises to be as noticeable as "Une Question Difficile."